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RECENT EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSION

"THE FUNCTION OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY."— . . . "He will discover upon the campus a most powerful and enigmatic influence. He will never be able to fathom it. It never congeals. It is subtle, irritating and withal extremely delightful. It has occasioned more discussion, done more good, and wrought more harm than any other single influence. It is the 'academic mind.' I shall attempt no definition of it. If you know it by experience I cannot add to your knowledge. If you do not know it you are to be congratulated and commiserated. All in all, I should prefer to defend rather than to attack the academic mind. I should not want to be the president of any university which did not suffer from this disease in chronic form. It makes for stability, for sound weighing of evidence, for scientific scholarship, for the absence of sentimentalism, and for a frank recognition of the power of the mind.

"On the other hand, it is guilty of some delightful and confusing results. To be a scholar, a man must put the emphasis on his own special field. Difficulty arises, however, when this emphasis becomes excessive, where there is no adequate planning of curricula and when little if anything is done to help the student really understand that knowledge is a unity. The bewildered student apparently is never able to reunite the *disjecta membra* of his thought world and to fashion them into the living reality we call life. It is because of these results that the academic mind is berated. It inevitably engenders aloofness, occasions the lack of a general sense of humor and minimizes those plain, humble, human characteristics that we look for in all men.

"I am inclined to believe that we must charge against the academic mind much of the dead formalism, and mechanical externality of American education. I should dislike to tell here all that I think of the various systems of admission which have been in vogue in our universities. Surely by these methods we have not intended to find real college material, but rather to encourage the accumulation of credits which will serve as a ticket of admission. At any rate, we have not encouraged intellectual interests and recognized vital facts which do not ap-

pear in record sheets. Character, purpose, and spirit are more important than the skill to pass examinations or the ability to secure a diploma. . . .

"Surely the examination system now employed in American universities is a symptom of the same ailment. We ask the student to pursue a variety of courses and then submit to a series of examinations. If he is reasonably successful he piles away his credits like so much wood that he has sawed. He repeats the process eight times and we give him a diploma. If we have been searching for a method of killing intellectual curiosity and a genuine spirit of inquiry we have been diabolically successful. If our aim is to convince the student that knowledge comes in chunks, that if it starts to melt or evaporate, it must be confined in watertight or airtight compartments, and that knowledge consists of separate fields bearing no relationship to the fascinating reality of life, then our methods justify the procedure. If to become educated is to center one's interest on acquiring enough credits to receive a diploma, then we have succeeded in quantity production beyond even the experts of the industrial world. If education is completed at commencement, then we are dealing with a real paradox which I understand to be something that is apparently absurd yet true. If a man engages in study for the purpose of charging his mind once and for all, and if on commencement day he disconnects intellectually from the source of power, then again there is occasion for just pride. . . .

"College supposedly is a place where a man is set free from the usual demands of life in order that he may come into contact with the rarest spirits of all time. In reality it is four years of leisure, of unhurried association with scholars! It is a time when a man finds himself and his friends, develops his sense of value and browses among the best books of all centuries! If this suggests the way the student uses his leisure then we know where he finds his deepest satisfaction and his real world! Frankly, he regards his university work as secondary, if not tertiary, and finds a satisfying outlet for his energy and genius in athletics, dramatics, journalism, and student government. Perhaps the highest test which American universities will ever be asked to meet lies just in this realm. Is there any method by which a student world can be developed in which the scholar,

the thinker and the writer will be just as highly honored as the man who achieves distinction in football. . . . Other nations have succeeded in placing the emphasis properly. The Englishman owes his success in the great war very largely to his genuine sense of sportsmanship. Nevertheless the games and races at the English universities are not primary nor all-absorbing. Intellectual achievement carries off the first honors. The American student's world of reality is the inevitable counterpart of the 'academic mind.' . . .

"Through the rattle and clamor of student activities, back of the endless ratiocinations of academic minds, there shine the abiding realities of true university ideals. Here men know the freedom of the truth. Ancient tyrannies may still oppress the multitudes. New monarchs may arise to enslave men. Others may enjoy great wealth. The university man possesses his mind and soul in self-respect. He will brook no interference with his untrammelled search for truth in all fields. Regardless of the consequences to preconceived notions, prejudices or superstitions, he goes calmly on his way patiently, painstakingly seeking for knowledge. His joy is to banish ignorance. His only fear is error; his deepest satisfaction is truth. He kneels at the shrine of truth. If one desires to understand the depth of this spirit, let him venture to rob the academic man of his freedom. Let one suggest that investigation shall be limited and the professor shall be muzzled if one desires to know how adamant is his devotion to science and how inviolate are his ideals of freedom. No, the university, with all of its shortcomings, stands as the impregnable citadel of truth. It can never be shaken without irreparable injury to society. In this era of industrial turmoil and social unrest, when mankind must cut its way through the twisted materials of a rudely shaken social order, the university, with its open and free search of truth stands as the bulwark of civilization. The professor may not constantly affirm this solemn reality, but to him it is more inviolate than life itself." . . . —*President M. L. Burton, University of Michigan.*

"THE ART OF EXAMINATION."—"The mechanical practice of credit for courses is, I believe, the greatest defect in the American educational system, and we ought to strive for some method of